

# Where are the Children buried?

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## Introduction

This report addresses the question where deceased Indian Residential School (IRS) students are buried. This is difficult to answer because of the varying circumstances of death and burial, coupled with the generally sparse information about Residential School cemeteries. It requires a historic understanding of school operations that contextualizes the patterns underlying death and burial. When documentation is insufficient, this historical perspective also aids prediction which former school sites are most likely to be associated with cemeteries. Also important is identifying the locations of the former schools as precisely as possible (an issue complicated by the fact that some schools were rebuilt in various locations under the same name), and then seeking out physical evidence of a nearby cemetery (or cemeteries). In some cases information is readily available, but in others there was little to be found in the available archival documents. In those situations attention shifted to an internet-based search, coupled with examination of maps and satellite images. This report concludes with recommendations how to address the gaps in our current knowledge about school cemeteries, and how best to document, commemorate and protect them.

This report represents a collective effort. Alexandra Maass initiated the research by gathering information from disparate sources, and preparing reports for schools with a reported cemetery. Scott Hamilton authored this report with input from Doug Smith. Hamilton built upon Maass' work by developing a historical interpretative context, documenting the location and condition of Residential School sites, and searching for evidence of cemeteries in maps and satellite imagery. The satellite imagery derives from either Google Earth™ or Birdseye™, the latter through a Garmin™ subscription service. This imagery is internet-based and available Canada-wide. Downloadable imagery of sufficient quality is a relatively recent phenomenon, and is not yet of uniformly good

quality throughout the country. That being said, much of it was of surprisingly good quality, with resolution of 2-5 metres or better. This allowed ready visual interpretation of larger ground features, and also cost-effective examination of school grounds located throughout Canada. Once the area of interest has been identified, a more comprehensive examination is possible by purchasing higher resolution satellite imagery from commercial vendors. Hamilton's work focused on the surviving documents, and did not involve contact with First Nations, churches that operated the schools, or municipalities within which the schools are now located. As addressed more fully in the recommendations section, building upon this foundation with locally based research initiatives are the obvious next steps.

In effect, this report offers an overview and 'gap analysis' to suggest where further research is required. It is divided into two parts. The first part (represented by this report) is a general overview, with specific schools used to illustrate key issues associated with IRS cemeteries. The second document is a more substantive resource that summarizes each school's location and construction sequence, duration of operation, and reported cemeteries. It includes maps, sketches, photos and satellite images, detailing the former school properties in as much detail as is currently possible. It also identifies 'information voids' where we either do not presently know the school location, or have not been able to identify a cemetery. This evaluation of current knowledge should be used as a starting point for seeking local knowledge to confirm or correct it, and as a catalyst for dialogue how to protect and maintain IRS cemeteries with their many marked and unmarked graves.

## **School Mortality**

Over about 140 years of operation at over 150 Indian Residential School locations, TRC research indicates that at least 3,213 children are reported to have died<sup>1</sup>. This is a conservative estimate in light of the sporadic record keeping and poor document survival, and the early state of research into a vast (and still growing) archive. Most of these children died far from home, and often without their families being adequately informed of the circumstances of death or the place of burial. For the most part, the surviving

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<sup>1</sup> This estimated total reflects TRC analysis of the Registers of Confirmed Deaths as of November 18, 2014.

records do not provide this information, and this report marks an early effort at searching for these resting places.

It is clear that communicable diseases were a primary cause of poor health and death for many Aboriginal people during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Some children might have contracted disease at home prior to attending school, but others were likely infected within crowded, often unsanitary, and poorly constructed residential schools. It is also likely that significant numbers of chronically ill children died within a few years after school discharge.

In his 1906 annual report, Dr. Peter Bryce, the chief medical officer for Indian Affairs, outlined the extent of this Aboriginal health crisis, and noted that “the Indian population of Canada has a mortality rate of more than double that of the whole population, and in some provinces more than three times.” Tuberculosis was the prevalent cause of death. He described a cycle of disease in which infants and children were infected at home and sent to residential schools, where they infected other children. The children infected in the schools were “sent home when too ill to remain at school, or because of being a danger to the other scholars, and have conveyed the disease to houses previously free.”<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Bryce again raised the issue of tuberculosis in the schools in 1909. In that year, he and Lafferty undertook a detailed examination of all 243 students at seven schools in southern Alberta. Bryce prepared a report of their work, and concluded that there was a “marked” presence of tuberculosis among all age groups. In some schools, “there was not a child that showed a normal temperature.” He noted that, although they were not included in his study, four boys recently discharged from the High River, Alberta, school were in an “advanced state of the illness.” And, “in no single instance in any school where a young child was found awaiting admission, did it not show signs of tuberculosis.”

Bryce also provided a national context for the school’s death rates. Using the statistics for the Shingwauk Home in Ontario, the Sarcee school in Alberta, and the Cranbrook school in British Columbia for the period from 1892 to 1908, he calculated an annual

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<sup>2</sup> Canada, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs, 1906*, 274–275.

death rate, from all causes, of 8,000 deaths per 100,000. (He included deaths at school and “soon after leaving” in making this calculation.) By comparison, according to Bryce, the 1901 Canadian census showed a death rate, from all causes, for those between five and fourteen years of age, of an equivalent of 430 per 100,000.<sup>3</sup> TRC statistical research reported elsewhere demonstrates that this pattern of much higher death rates compared to children within the general Canadian population persisted as late as 1945. Thereafter, the death rate among Aboriginal children attending residential schools declined to levels more consistent with the general population.

While the appalling death rates within the Residential Schools to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century far exceeded that among non-Aboriginal Canadians, it must be considered in the context of health care and medical knowledge in early Canada. Many of the early residential schools were established within the first 50 years of Canadian Confederation, at a time of rapid economic development and large-scale immigration into regions with large Aboriginal populations. The more frequent contact resulted in rapid spread of disease to Indigenous populations with limited resistance to infectious disease. Provincial and municipal governments were either not yet established or were in their infancy, and public health and cemetery regulations were comparatively undeveloped. Given the lack of regulation at the time, it appears that most residential school graveyards were established informally, and have left little in the way of formal documentation. This also likely contributed to a suspected under-reporting of mortality in the schools, particularly in late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. This would have been particularly the case when school staff faced emergency situations during disease outbreaks that resulted in multiple deaths. In such circumstances, they may have been caring for many sick people with insufficient medical assistance, and with little help in preparing and burying those who died. It is also clear that insufficient consideration was made for the continuing care of graveyards upon closure of the Indian Residential Schools. Uncertainty over responsibility for closed schools and cemeteries (i.e. the churches that operated the facilities, or the federal government who financed and administered the system) remains an important issue. That

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<sup>3</sup> Library and Archives Canada, RG10, volume 3957, file 140754-1, P. H. Bryce to F. Pedley, 5 November 1909.

is, what entity should accept responsibility for the documentation, ongoing maintenance, protection, and commemoration of IRS cemeteries?

Some students died at the schools, while other seriously ill children were returned home, or admitted to hospitals or sanatoria where some may have later died. Some of the deceased were returned to their families for burial, but most others were likely buried in cemeteries on school grounds, or in nearby church, reserve or municipal cemeteries. We have no clear sense of the relative frequency with which these alternatives were employed, nor how circumstances varied with Church policy, through time, or across geography and political jurisdiction.

While some graves and cemeteries associated with the residential schools are known and are still maintained, others are now unknown or incompletely documented in the literature, and may even have passed from local memory. Some burial places are within or near old school grounds, but few seem to have been formally identified and designated by the provincial and territorial agencies responsible for cemetery regulation. Many of these inactive and overgrown cemeteries are not readily identifiable and are not maintained. Without formal documentation, it becomes more difficult to offer protection from contemporary or future land development. Even when considering presently known and maintained cemeteries, some graves may lie unrecognized after the decay and disappearance of wood grave markers and enclosing graveyard fences. This presents a serious challenge for identifying, commemorating, or protecting unmarked graves and undocumented cemeteries. Possible strategies for remediating this situation are offered later in this report.

## **Residential Schools in Historical Context**

Indian Residential School operations encompass much of Canada's nationhood. Often established before regions achieved provincial status, many early Residential Schools derive from Christian missionary work. Their establishment and operation was closely tied to the colonial development, and also early Canadian policies designed to facilitate agricultural settlement and economic development. There is a growing literature base

regarding these schools, of which books by J. S. Milloy<sup>4</sup> and J. R. Miller<sup>5</sup> are the most prominent, and contribute much to this general discussion.

While efforts at schooling Aboriginal children date back to colonial New France<sup>6</sup>, the early Church-operated boarding schools considered here date from the 1830s. The early mission schools were often established within or near Native communities, and often contained a school, a church, rectory or convent, a cemetery and sometimes a small hospital. They also often contained farm buildings, gardens or a sawmill to improve self-sufficiency, and to provide vocational training.

Only eight mission schools intended specifically for Aboriginal education were operating at the time of Confederation (Table 1), but they sharply increased in number shortly after Canada's 1870 purchase of Rupert's Land, and with federal funding provisions for residential schools. This federal interest in Aboriginal education was one outcome of treaty making throughout the newly acquired territory after 1871. As described in more detail elsewhere, these schools were intended to provide basic literacy, to unilaterally acculturate children to non-Aboriginal social and religious values, and to provide vocational skills calculated to facilitate assimilation.

Beginning in 1883, the Canadian government also began to establish 'industrial schools'. These larger institutions were calculated to provide both academic and 'industrial' training, with an eye to aid employment and integration within the increasingly dominant Euro-Canadian society. This often involved farm operations, with boys doing much of the outside labour (farm chores, gardening, firewood cutting, construction), and girls doing much of the indoor labour (sewing, cleaning, washing and cooking). These schools were also more frequently located near non-aboriginal communities, with students drawn from distant reserves. While the churches continued to run the industrial schools, the federal government initially paid the cost of construction and operation. Such schools also appear to be less frequently associated with a mission and church. In the early 1890s funding of these schools was placed on a *per capita*

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<sup>4</sup> 1999 *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986*. Univ. of Manitoba Press

<sup>5</sup> 1996 *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press.

<sup>6</sup> Auger, Donald J. 2005, *Indian Residential Schools In Ontario*. Nishnawbe Aski Nation, page 4.

system, but by the 1920s the federal government stopped differentiating between industrial and regular residential schools.

These acculturative policies and practices seriously impacted children who were already vulnerable to communicable disease. As the Residential School system expanded in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and in light of the general mortality patterns within Aboriginal communities of early Canada, rates of student illness and death remained high. This would have been compounded by poor health screening at admission, coupled with the generally poor living conditions within the schools. However, accurately determining the annual number of student deaths is not currently possible given the poor state of the records. It is also difficult to determine where deceased children might have been buried. Thus, this report summarizes the existing cemetery information, and offers suggestions (based upon the sum of probabilities) which schools most likely suffered mortality and had cemeteries.

### **Patterns in school numbers and enrollment.**

This section reviews numeric information addressing the growth of the IRS system, coupled with what we know about the changing pattern of student illness and death. In the absence of reliable mortality records, these patterns offer a means of identifying schools that are more likely to have suffered student mortality, and therefore, are more likely to be associated with a cemetery. The schools considered here date from as early as 1828 (Mohawk Institute, Ontario) to as late as 1996. Most of the schools operated within a roughly 90-year period between the early 1880s through to the early 1970s. Figure 1 offers a cumulative summary of the annual number of schools operating within each province or territory. It reports the rapid growth in school numbers after 1870 (especially in western Canada and northern Ontario), and a post-1950 increase in schools and hostels in the Arctic (including northern Québec).

The total number of schools sharply increased after the late 1880s, forming an irregular plateau until the late 1930s (Figure 1). Thereafter they briefly declined during the 1940s and early 50s, but again climbed sharply to reach a peak of 90 in 1964. After

about 1972 school numbers rapidly decreased in all jurisdictions, with the last schools persisting until as late as 1996 in Saskatchewan, Nunavut and the North West Territories.

Figure 1 includes the annual number of reported student deaths, and reveals wild fluctuations from year to year. While these sharp fluctuations may reflect the impact of periodic epidemics that swept through the schools, it is more likely to be due to poor record keeping or sporadic survival of records. Perhaps the only reliable trend is apparent with the abrupt decline in annual mortality after about 1948, and the generally low rates thereafter until the closure of the last residential schools in 1996.

Figure 2 simultaneously presents the annual number of operating schools, coupled with the reported enrollment and number of deaths. To meaningfully present all three variables on a single chart, the numbers of schools and mortalities are scaled using the left vertical axis, and total annual student enrollment is scaled using the right vertical axis. Note that on Figure 2 the number of students enrolled in day schools is also plotted from 1930 through to 1965 (from 1965 onwards Indian Affairs ceased to provide annual reports on the number of residential school students). Consistent with the increasing numbers of residential schools, annual student enrollment climbed after the late 1880s, and again after 1920, to reach a peak of over 10,000 annual enrolments by the early 1950s (Figure 2). Thereafter enrolment numbers stabilized and then declined in face of the continued enrolment growth at the day schools (Figure 2). By the late 1960s the numbers of schools in operation also declined sharply. Analysis presented elsewhere in TRC reports indicates that these enrollment numbers are less reliable prior to ca. 1890 and after 1962. Therefore, Figure 2 does not plot enrolment numbers after about 1965.

## **Mortality Patterns**

Figure 2 demonstrates that while the number of schools increased after the mid 1870s, these predominately church-run (and government financed) ‘industrial’ and ‘boarding’ schools had comparatively low student enrollments until after 1890, and did not increase sharply until after the mid 1920s. In 1920 an Indian Act amendment gave the Department of Indian Affairs the authority to send any school-aged First Nations child to either a day school or a residential school. In many isolated communities with insufficient numbers to



justify a day school, there was no alternative to enrolment in a residential school. The decade-long decline in the numbers of schools in the 1940s and early 1950s coincides with the era of peak student enrollment in the residential schools. In part this reflects destruction of a number of schools. Between 1940 to 1949 school buildings at the following locations were destroyed by fire.

- 1940: Carcross, Yukon Territory.<sup>7</sup>
- 1940: Ahousaht, British Columbia.<sup>8</sup>
- 1941: Alberni, British Columbia.<sup>9</sup>
- 1942: File Hills, Saskatchewan.<sup>10</sup>
- 1943: Fort George, Quebec, (the Anglican school).<sup>11</sup>
- 1943: Onion Lake, Saskatchewan (the Anglican school).<sup>12</sup>
- 1945: Wabasca, Alberta.<sup>13</sup>
- 1946: Norway House, Manitoba.<sup>14</sup>
- 1947: Lac la Ronge, Saskatchewan.<sup>15</sup>
- 1948: Delmas, Saskatchewan (Thunderchild).<sup>16</sup>

Other schools were closed because of the high risk of fire. In 1946 the Mount Elgin school in Munsey, Ontario was closed because of the fire hazard.<sup>17</sup> In 1950 the Saskatchewan fire commissioner's office also condemned the Round Lake, Saskatchewan

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<sup>7</sup> Canada, Department of Mines and Resources, *Report of Indian Affairs Branch for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1940*, 186.

<sup>8</sup> Canada, Department of Mines and Resources, *Report of Indian Affairs Branch for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1940*, 186.

<sup>9</sup> Canada, Department of Mines and Resources, *Report of Indian Affairs Branch for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1941*, 166.

<sup>10</sup> TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, Volume 6303, File 653-5, part 6, E.S. Jones to The Secretary, Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Mines and Resources, 10 April 1943; Canada, Department of Mines and Resources, *Report of Indian Affairs Branch for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1942*, 136 [FHR-000252]

<sup>11</sup> TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, RG10, Vol. 6112, File 350-5, pt. 1, Thomas Orford to Secretary, Indian Affairs, 3 February 1943. [FGA-001026]

<sup>12</sup> Canada, Department of Mines and Resources, *Report of Indian Affairs Branch for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1944*, 155.

<sup>13</sup> TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, RG10, Vol. 6378, File 767-5, pt. 3, H.A. Alderwood to R.A. Hoey, 3 January 1945; Canada, Department of Mines and Resources, *Report of Indian Affairs Branch for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1945*, 169. [JON-003675]

<sup>14</sup> TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, RG10, Vol. 6268, File 581-1 pt. 2, R.A. Hoey to Acting Deputy Minister, 29 May 1946. [NHU-000117]

<sup>15</sup> TRC, NRA, Provincial Archives of Alberta, Anglican Diocese of Athabasca Fonds, Edmonton, AB, Acc. PR1970.0387/1641, Box 41, Anglican Diocese of Athabasca Fonds, File A320/572, Indian Schools - General, Official Correspondence of Bishop Sovereign, 1941-1947, Report of Fire at All Saints' School, Lac la Ronge, Sask. 2 February 1947. [PAR-123539]

<sup>16</sup> TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, RG10, Vol. 8756, File 671/25-1-010, J.P.B. Ostrander to Indian Affairs Branch, 19 January 1948. [THR-000266-0001]

<sup>17</sup> TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, RG10, Vol. 6210, File 468-10, pt. 5, Samuel Devlin to Indian Affairs, 20 May 1946. [MER-003806-0001]

school.<sup>18</sup> It is not until the early 1970s that the number of residential schools in operation declined sharply, coinciding with the post-1950 trend of increasing First Nations day school enrollment (Figure 2). This marked the rapid end of Indian Residential School operations. These trends are important when considering annual mortality numbers.

Figure 2 reveals that the first two thirds of the IRS era (up to the late 1940s) was characterized the early growth of residential schools, and high death rates. The sharp ‘peaks and valleys’ in the annual mortality curve (Figure 2) are likely a function of incomplete reporting, coupled with periodic disease epidemics. The late 19<sup>th</sup> Century was a time of comparatively undeveloped health care, with epidemiologically vulnerable Indigenous populations coming in sustained contact with Euro-Canadian newcomers. The pattern of illness and death within the schools likely mimics that apparent on the Reserves, but the crowded and generally poor living conditions within the schools may have exacerbated the problem.

The comparatively low numbers of annual deaths reported in Figure 2 during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century is deceptive and may be a function of both sporadic reporting and the comparatively low numbers of children enrolled in the schools. TRC statistical analysis reported elsewhere notes a high annual death rate (deaths per 1,000) during the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. This suggests that chronic illness and death was also a severe problem in the early schools contrary to the visual impression left from Figures 1 and 2. The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century coincides with the rapid increase in student enrolment, particularly after the early 1920s (Figure 2). With larger numbers of children living within these generally inadequate facilities, they faced a high risk of disease transmission, contributing to continued high annual mortality. Interestingly, school mortality observed during the devastating 1918-19 Spanish Influenza epidemic appears as only one of several ‘moderate’ peaks in reported deaths (Figure 2). It is not clear whether this reflects under-reporting at a time of crisis, or that the extraordinary nation-wide contagion and death did not differ much from the ‘normal’ pattern found in the Residential Schools at the time.

The magnitude of crisis deriving from an epidemic sweeping through the schools is almost unimaginable from a 21<sup>st</sup> Century perspective. Several of the schools were

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<sup>18</sup> TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, RG 10, Volume 6333, File 661-2, part 6, R.E. Tiffin, Fire Commissioner to J.P.B. Ostrander, 31 August 1950. [RLS-000552]

overwhelmed by the 1918–19 influenza pandemic. In 1918 all but two of the children and all of the staff contracted influenza at the Fort St. James, British Columbia, school and surrounding community. In the end seventy-eight people, including students, died. Initially, Father Joseph Allard, who served as the school principal conducted funeral services at the mission cemetery. But, as he wrote in his diary, “The others were brought in two or three at a time, but I could not go to the graveyard with all of them. In fact, several bodies were piled up in an empty cabin because there was no grave ready. A large common grave was dug for them.”<sup>19</sup> Tragically, the 1918-19 influenza epidemic was only one of many that repeatedly swept through residential schools at various times during their history, likely contributing to the wild fluctuations in annual mortality (Figure 2).

It was not until after World War II that the annual number of reported deaths declined to less than 15 per year (Figure 2). This likely reflects more effective public health measures coupled with use of antibiotics, and improvement in school operations. Given the severity of tuberculosis-related illness within the schools, the 1950s availability of drug-based treatment coupled with widespread inoculation was particularly important for the declining death rates. This is notable as it coincides with the time of the maximum number of schools and student enrollments (Figure 2).

In summary, the early industrial and boarding schools likely experienced frequent death despite their comparatively modest enrollments (Figure 2). Epidemics reported at the early schools suggest that chronic illness and death likely exceeded that reported in Figure 2. This is consistent with Bryce’s (1907, 1922) observations of high mortality in the boarding schools that has been discussed at length in the established literature (see Milloy 1999).

Death among IRS students likely remained comparatively common until the mid 1940s, whereupon it became an increasingly rare event. While affected by unreliable data, the trends in annual death within the schools can be defined by two eras represented by a vertical dashed line in Figure 2. For the sake of this discussion, we should assume that most schools dating prior to 1948 experienced student illness and/or death, with a

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<sup>19</sup> Father Allard’s diary quoted in Cronin, *Cross in the Wilderness*, 219.

very high probability of chronic illness and multiple deaths occurring at schools operating in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Table 1 lists the schools (in their various locations) and their duration of operation in decade-long intervals. The decade columns are shaded to illustrate the shifting probability that specific schools experienced student illness and/or death. It demonstrates that a significant number operated for a long time and prior to 1945, during the time of high risk of student mortality. While student illness and death occurred into the recent past, the short-lived and comparatively recent schools and hostels dating after ca. 1948 have the lowest probability of student death. Table 1 indicates that such schools are more commonly found in the northern territories and northern Québec. In the absence of more definitive means of identifying schools with associated cemeteries, this may be our most useful indicator of the existence of residential school cemeteries. While comparatively few schools have cemeteries explicitly reported, it should be assumed that most (particularly those dating to prior to 1945) experienced death, and that the children were buried on school grounds or at some other nearby cemetery.

## **The colonization of northwestern Canada**

Many of the early Residential Schools were established after 1885 throughout western and northern Canada, and operated at a time of rapid immigration and development (Figure 3). These demographic and political transformations had profound impacts upon Aboriginal people, and are important for understanding the changing character of the residential schools and their operations. Specific schools are used as examples of different situations (with accompanying graphics). Readers seeking a more comprehensive summary are directed to the companion report filed with the TRC.

After the 1870 purchase of Rupert's Land, and its integration into the North West Territories, Canada faced significant challenges. One included negotiation of a succession of treaties that began in the grassland/parkland region (Figure 3). These so-called 'numbered' treaties reflect the temporally sequenced development of western Canada, with treaties being signed as various regions became subject to Euro-Canadian immigration and development interest. The earliest ones were negotiated where European

homestead settlement was first anticipated, with subsequent ones encompassing much of subarctic western Canada (Figure 3).

These treaties provided modest provisions for Indigenous groups who were facing serious economic and demographic crises. It also ensured their confinement upon reserves under the authority of Indian Agents, thereby facilitating large-scale Euro-Canadian agricultural settlement. This also involved encouraging Aboriginal acceptance of Christianity and conventional Victorian values, including a sedentary agrarian lifestyle. These Euro-Canadian notions of ‘progress’ were envisioned as inevitable, and were consistent with the Christian Churches’ interest in missionary work throughout the British Empire. Not surprisingly, these missionaries were at the vanguard in establishing the early Aboriginal schools throughout the new Canadian territories. This is dramatically evident in Figure 3 that reports only a few church-financed boarding schools in operation at the time of Confederation (Figure 3: Map1), but a very rapid increase in the number of federally funded schools within 25 years of the 1870 purchase of Rupert’s Land (Figure 3: Map 2).

The early missions and schools were often built near reserves that were established shortly after treaty signing. They included both day and boarding schools, and recruited local children as well as those from more distant communities. Both local and non-local children were sometimes boarded at the schools. This was calculated to promote the children’s acculturation through sustained school attendance, and by removing them from regular family influence. It also ensured enrolment in school while parents were engaged in traditional harvest activities away from the reserve community (i.e. trap lines, hunting and fishing trips).

While agricultural settlement occurred rapidly throughout the prairie west after the 1885 completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway, communities were small and widely dispersed. Extra-regional transportation was limited, and dependent upon the slowly developing railway networks built primarily to support agriculture. Health care, municipal and education services, and other community infrastructure were generally underdeveloped, but was the most advanced within the predominately Euro-Canadian settlements.

Infrastructure on the Reserves remained modest, and was frequently associated with the Indian Agency, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) trade store, and the church mission. It may have also featured a day school or residential school and sometimes a small hospital, and often became the hub of the Aboriginal reserve settlement. Two examples include Moose Factory (Figure 4, 5) and Fort Providence (Figure 6 to 9), both of which developed as northern Aboriginal communities associated with Indian Residential Schools and cemeteries.

While often focused on educating the young, the missionaries sought to convert the entire Aboriginal community to Christianity and Euro-Canadian social norms. Lifestyle transformation, especially burial ritual, was important, often leading to development of a community cemetery near the mission church. As more families settled into the mission/trade post settlements, and in light of the high incidence of disease and death, such cemeteries likely grew rapidly. This is evident with both the St. Thomas Anglican churchyard cemetery at Moose Factory (Figure 4) and the All Saints Roman Catholic cemetery at Fort Providence (Figure 7). Similar development of a community cemetery through early IRS operations is apparent at St. Margaret's Catholic mission, school, church and cemetery complex at Couchiching First Nation near Fort Frances (Figure 10-11), at the Sechelt First Nation near Vancouver (Figure 12-14), and at Norway House First Nation (Rossville) in northern Manitoba (Figure 15-17). In all cases, the cemeteries likely accommodated both deceased IRS students and members of the mission church. This significantly complicates the task of identifying the graves of deceased school children: some who were members of the host community, but others who might have been from distant First Nations.

The church, boarding school, hospital and cemetery complex remain an enduring feature within many contemporary communities. Sometimes as old buildings deteriorated or burned down, they were replaced with new structures on or near the original sites. In other situations the Residential Schools were abandoned upon closure (Birtle IRS, Spanish IRS), others were torn down (Fort William IRS), while still others were refurbished and transformed to serve new functions (Blue Quills IRS). But in many cases the old church and its cemetery remain in operation. This is evident at Lebret, Saskatchewan where the Sacred Heart Catholic church and cemetery remain operating

within the town site, while the adjacent residential school was closed and demolished (Figure 18, 19, 20). At Marieval IRS (on Cowesess First Nation, Saskatchewan), the original school was demolished and replaced with a day school, but the church, rectory and cemetery remain (Figure 21, 22, 23, 24). St. Martin's (Desmarais) Residential School at Wabasca Lake in northern Alberta was demolished upon school closure, but the hospital and cemetery grounds remain in operation (Figure 25). Similar refurbishment and reuse is evident at St. Eugene's IRS near Cranbrook, BC (Figure 26). In this case the old residential school was transformed into a hotel resort and cultural centre adjacent to a golf course<sup>20</sup>. The school cemetery remains visible on land adjacent to the golf course fairways (Figure 26, 27), but it is not clear whether the cemetery remains in use. In the case of both Alberni and Kamloops Indian Residential Schools, the property was taken over by a local First Nation, and the facilities continue to serve community functions. At Alberni IRS, the school grounds serve Band administrative functions, with the unmarked old school cemetery located behind the structures and parking lot (Figure 28)<sup>21</sup>. In the case of Kamloops IRS, the facility was transformed into a cultural centre (Figure 29)<sup>22</sup>. Online research has not yet revealed the cemetery at the latter school.

Residential Schools often went through a succession of rebuilding episodes as older structures became too small, became unusable, were destroyed by fire, or became redundant and were re-established in a more suitable location. This could result in a school (often with the same name or administered by the same church) moving from one location to another. One example is the sequence of school operations that began at All Saints IRS at Lac La Ronge (Saskatchewan, 1907 to 1947), but was later moved to Prince Albert, Saskatchewan (1947 to 1996)<sup>23</sup>. The school name was changed from All Saints to Prince Albert IRS in 1953. The Prince Albert school also received students transferred from nearby St Albans IRS (1944-1951), which in turn had received students from St. Barnabas IRS at Onion Lake (1892-1943) upon its closure.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100021303/1100100021310> accessed Jan 18, 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Alex Maass, TRC Cemetery report for Alberni IRS. She cites an email communication from Mr. Porgeng of the B.C. Archaeology Branch dated April 13, 2012 to locate the cemetery immediately south of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council Buildings.

<sup>22</sup> Alex Maass, TRC Cemetery Report indicating that the original IRS is now the 'Chief Louis Center' operated by the Secwepemc Kamloops Indian Band.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.anglican.ca/relationships/histories/all-saints-school-sk> accessed Jan 18, 2015.

Another example of geographic shifts in operation is evident with the residential school that began at Lac La Biche (Alberta), and then moved to Saddle Lake and then finally to near St. Paul, Alberta. Cemeteries are likely associated with at least the two oldest schools in this sequence. The first one was named Notre Dame des Victories or Hospice St. Joseph, and was operated by the Catholic Church at Lac La Biche between 1862 and 1898<sup>24</sup>. The site is a national historic site, and the church, convent building and cemetery have been restored and maintained (Figure 30). This mission school declined in importance as reserves developed, and the Sisters of Charity moved it to the Saddle Lake region, where it operated with federal funding from 1898 to 1932 on the Blue Quills First Nation (Figure 31)<sup>25</sup>. The school (and associated cemetery) may have been in close proximity to the mission church, and perhaps was replaced with the *Kihew Asiniy* Education Centre (Figure 31). The final phase of this Indian Residential School (also known as Blue Quills) was located about 5 km west of St. Paul, Alberta (Figure 32), and operated between 1932 and 1970. Thereafter it was taken over by the Blue Quills Native Education Council, and in 1990 it became the Blue Quills First Nations College (Figure 32). No cemetery is reported (nor visible on the satellite imagery) at this latter site.

While most of the Indian Residential schools were established in remote or rural locations, some were established in major centres, and became enclosed by urban development. This includes St. Paul's IRS (1899-1959), established adjacent to the Squamish First Nation (North Vancouver), Fort William IRS (Thunder Bay), and Cecilia Jeffery IRS and St. Mary's IRS (both in Kenora). The Squamish IRS was demolished in 1959 and the land was redeveloped as St Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School, with the nearby cemetery completely surrounded by residential development (Figure 33 and 34)<sup>26</sup>. St. Joseph's IRS, after initially operating on Fort William First Nation, was moved into the town of Fort William (now Thunder Bay) where it operated until 1968 (Figure 35)<sup>27</sup>. It was then demolished, and replaced with Pope John Paul II Elementary School. At least

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<sup>24</sup> <https://hermis.alberta.ca/ARHP/Details.aspx?DeptID=1&ObjectID=4665-0427> accessed Jan 18, 2015.

<sup>25</sup> <http://archives.algomau.ca/main/taxonomy/term/1342> , <http://www.bluequills.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/BQ-30th-Anniversary-Book.pdf>, <http://oblatesinthewest.library.ualberta.ca/eng/impact/indianschools.html> accessed Jan 18, 2015,

<sup>26</sup> Alex Maass, TRC Cemetery report who cites Brenda Norrel 2008 (apparently the author of a no longer accessible file at [www.nciv.net](http://www.nciv.net)), <http://irsr.ca/st-pauls-indian-residential-school/>, accessed Jan 18, 2015.

<sup>27</sup> Auger, Donald J. 2005, Indian Residential Schools in Ontario, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, pp. 99-107



some of the children who died while attending this school were buried at St. Patrick's Cemetery (Figure 35). Cecilia Jeffery IRS was first established at Shoal Lake along the Manitoba/Ontario border (1902-1929), but was moved to land adjacent to Round Lake in Kenora, Ontario where it operated from 1929 to 1974<sup>28</sup>. The latter property is presently used for Treaty #3 administrative functions, with two adjacent cemeteries lying untended and overgrown between Homestake Road and the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks (Figure 36). St. Mary's IRS is also located in Kenora, and has been partially redeveloped as a marina, with a parking lot now occupying the former school site (Figure 37, 38, 39)<sup>29</sup>. The cemetery associated with this school is documented in early 20<sup>th</sup> Century photographs (Figure 40), but its location (apparently on the hillside east of the school buildings) has not yet been identified.

In some circumstances, the Indian Residential School was wholly or partially demolished upon closure, but the associated cemetery receives continued maintenance and care. Examples include the cemeteries near the Elkhorn IRS (Manitoba) (Figure 41) and the Spanish IRS (Ontario) (Figure 42), and two discrete cemeteries within the Onion Lake First Nation (Saskatchewan) (Figure 43, 44). The latter two are likely associated with either St. Anthony's Catholic or St. Barnabas Anglican Indian Residential Schools.

Since the early residential schools operated at a time of high death rates, and were associated with missions located close to reserves, the mission cemeteries likely contain both the bodies of local school children and other community members (see Sechelt cemetery in 1914 in Figure 14). Given the rather limited transportation capacity of early Canada, it would have been difficult and expensive to return deceased non-local students to their home communities. Instead, they too were likely buried in the school/mission cemeteries. As discussed below, this is certainly consistent with expectations of the Department of Indian Affairs of the time.

As the larger Industrial and Residential Schools became established after 1883, there was a tendency to locate them nearer to predominately Euro-Canadian settlements, but still segregated from them. Most of the students were non-local, and those who died were

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<sup>28</sup> Alex Maass, TRC Cemetery report, also Auger (2005: 63-76)

<sup>29</sup> Alex Maass, TRC Cemetery report, also Auger (2005: 53-62)

likely buried in school cemeteries (rather than at municipal cemeteries where they had no family or ethnic connection). The industrial schools were often imposing facilities with expansive farm operations, but often without the mission church that was a common feature of the earlier Residential Schools. Examples of farm-oriented industrial schools are the Brandon<sup>30</sup> (Figure 45) and Birtle<sup>31</sup> (Figure 46, 47) operations, both located in southwestern Manitoba. Both were also established on the edge of predominately Euro-Canadian farm communities, and received Aboriginal children from widely dispersed locations.

Research conducted as part of Katherine Nichols' Anthropology Master's degree at University of Manitoba indicates that two cemeteries are associated with the Brandon Indian Residential School (Nichols 2014:Per. Comm.). She cites local informants who indicate one was used during the earlier phase of school operations. It was located near the Assiniboine River, about 1,400 metres south of the school in what became Curran Park (Figure 45). This is consistent with vague internet-based reports of a Brandon Indian Residential School cemetery within Curran Park<sup>32</sup>. This cemetery was closed at some point in favour of the second cemetery, located ca. 500 metres north of the school on the Assiniboine River valley wall (Figure 45). Curran Park has been sold and redeveloped as a private campground (Turtle Crossing Campground). The location and condition of the IRS cemetery is not presently known, but repeated redevelopment of the property points to the importance of documentation of such cemeteries to facilitate appropriate land use planning and redevelopment.

The Birtle Indian Residential School remains standing as an abandoned facility on the north valley wall of Birdtail Creek (Figure 46). This large property contained a succession of two large school/residence buildings, with an extensive barnyard located to the east (Figure 46, 47). Some of these abandoned buildings remain standing, however the school cemetery was not identified in the available documents, nor is it visible in the

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<sup>30</sup> Alex Maass, TRC Cemetery Report, <http://thechildrenremembered.ca/school-locations/brandon/> accessed Jan 18, 2015.

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/sites/birtleresidentialschool.shtml> accessed Jan 18, 2015, also 'The New Leaf', Newsletter published by South West Branch of the Manitoba Genealogical Society of Brandon, Manitoba, Edition 14, June, 2012, ISBN #026122-98-01.

<sup>32</sup> (<http://geneofun.on.ca/cems/MB>)

satellite imagery. It likely lies abandoned and overgrown by brush and tall grass somewhere along the valley wall.

As health infrastructure developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, seriously ill children were more frequently sent to a hospital or a tuberculosis sanatorium. If these students died while at a hospital, they may have been buried at those facilities, in a nearby municipal cemetery, or in the cemetery of a nearby Indian Residential School. The complexity of these arrangements is evident with the burial of Inuit and First Nations patients who died while admitted at the Charles Cammel Hospital in Edmonton<sup>33</sup>. Deceased Protestant patients were buried at the Edmonton-Poundmaker Indian Residential School (Figure 48, 49), while deceased Catholic patients were buried in the Catholic cemetery on the Stony Plain or Enoch First Nation.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps the latter burials are within the cemetery adjacent to the current Roman Catholic Church on the Reserve (Figure 50).

The situation at Coqualeetza IRS (1887-1940) (near Chilliwack, BC) also reflects the complexity of burial arrangements. Alex Maass reports that she could not find reference to a cemetery used during its operation as a residential school (1925-1940), but that there are a few references to student deaths<sup>35</sup>. However a cemetery was reported in operation (somewhere on Skway I.R. #4) during the school's subsequent use as a tuberculosis sanatorium (1941 to ca. 1967). She speculates that since several First Nations are located near the residential school, at least the local deceased IRS students might have been buried in the cemeteries at either Skwak First Nation reserve 4 or Skowkale First Nation (Fig 51 and 52).

Sometimes deceased students were buried in a municipal cemetery associated with the denomination that was in charge of the Indian Residential School. This may have occurred at the first Chapleau Indian Residential School (1907-1921), in Ontario. It was located on the east bank of the Nebskwashi River, opposite the Chapleau town site (Figure 53). Local reminiscences suggest that children who died while attending this

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<sup>33</sup> Alex Maass, TRC Cemetery Report citing various INAC documents.

<sup>34</sup> Unpublished Cemetery Report for Edmonton IRS by Alex Maass citing INAC – AB Regional Records Office – Edmonton, 774/36-7 Vol. 2 4/61 – 10/65 ALB-CR, Memorandum Date 03/23/1966 CT Summation Database DocID EDM-002434

<sup>35</sup> Alex Maass, TRC Cemetery Report, citing various archival documents.

Anglican school might have been buried in a portion of the Protestant Cemetery, located along the west bank of the Nebskwashi River (Figure 53)<sup>36</sup>. In 1921, when the school was replaced with a new facility located about 3 km to the south, an IRS cemetery was established near the new location (Figure 54)<sup>37</sup>.

Another defining feature of the Indian Residential School era is the competition between various Christian denominations in their missionary efforts. Sometimes Catholic and Protestant churches established mission churches, schools and hospitals in close proximity to one another (see closely spaced mission/school complexes at North and South Wabasca Lakes, Figure 25, and also at Onion Lake First Nation, Figure 43, 44). This is also evident with the completing mission, church, school, hospital and cemetery complexes observed at Aklavik in the NWT (Figure 55, 56).

While comparatively few IRS cemeteries are explicitly referred to within the surviving literature, the age and duration of most schools suggests that cemeteries were likely associated with most of them. In search of those cemeteries, the area surrounding each school was systematically examined using the available maps and satellite imagery. In some cases they were not evident, but possible cemeteries were detected in a surprisingly large number of others. Success was dependent on the resolution and clarity of the available satellite imagery, and whether the ground vegetation was sufficiently sparse to permit detection of ground features indicative of cemeteries. This is illustrated with two Indian Residential Schools in Saskatchewan.

File Hills IRS (1899 to 1949) was located immediately west of the Okanesse First Nation (Figure 57)<sup>38</sup>. While the records do not offer a precise location, a hand-drawn map directing people to a reunion on the property suggests it was at the end of an access road within the nw quarter of section 33, Township 22 Range 11, W2 (Figure 58, 59, 60). The school cemetery is also vaguely reported to be within the ne quarter of section 33 (Figure

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<sup>36</sup> Alex Maass, TRC Cemetery Report, email correspondence between Maass and Ms. Ann Louise Etter (a Chapleau Resident) reports a communication from Mr. Michael Morris (a former mayor of Chapleau) who described a portion of the 'old Protestant cemetery' within Chapleau as containing Aboriginal Graves. Ms. Etter speculated that these graves might be those of school children who died while attending the first Chapleau IRS, located nearby on the opposite site of the Nebshwashi River.

<sup>37</sup> Alex Maass, TRC Cemetery Report, see also Auger (2005:135-146).

<sup>38</sup> Alex Maass, TRC Cemetery Report, see also personal communications between Maass and Cecile Fausak dated April 24, 2012 regarding location of cemetery are reported by Messrs. John Stonechild and Frances Tuckanow.

58, 60). Local informants indicated that it was 400-800 metres removed from the school, in the brush a short distance from a cart trail (see caption in Figure 60). This is not particularly useful locational information, but close examination of satellite imagery reveals a cart trail near a cluster of elongated grey/white features, all oriented in the same direction (Figure 60). These features cannot be unequivocally identified from the available imagery, but their approximate size and orientation suggest grave shafts, or perhaps individual picket fences surrounding each grave. Such tentative interpretations require either ‘ground truthing’ to determine the actual nature of the features, or solicitation of local information to confirm, reject or refine the interpretation.

Sturgeon Landing IRS (1926-1952) is located at the north end of Namew Lake along the Saskatchewan/Manitoba border (Figure 61)<sup>39</sup>. Its location is poorly documented, but was on either the east or west bank of the Sturgeon-Weir River at its outlet. The satellite imagery does not reveal either school foundations or a cemetery near the current settlement on the east bank (Figure 62). However examination of the west bank reveals an extensive clearing, with a trail running through it (Figure 62). Several probable cultural features were observed along the trail (Figure 62, 63). Zone 1 (Figure 63) contains a number of grey-white oval discolorations that are oriented approximately north/south. These disturbances lie parallel to one another and are arranged in rows, suggesting a small graveyard. Immediately to the south in Zone 2 (Figure 63) a series of linear scars are observed in the ground surface. It is not clear whether they represent plow scars, drainage ditches or foundation trenches, but may be remnant features associated with the school. Again, such remotely sensed indicators of possible settlement require review, validation or correction by local knowledge holders.

## Burial policy

As in so many other aspects of the Canadian residential school system, the federal government appears to have been slow to develop a formal policy governing the burial of students who died at the schools. Instead, the burial of deceased students appears to be rather *ad hoc*, and varied from school to school. The Department of Indian Affairs seems to have expected the churches to cover funeral costs, and to bury students in mission or

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<sup>39</sup> <http://www.sjsh.org/162-field-sturgeon-landing.html> accessed Jan 18, 2015

residential school cemeteries. The earliest government policy directive identified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission dates from 1958, fully 75 years after the rapid expansion of the residential school system. It states that the department was prepared to authorize only minimum funeral expenditures, and would only pay for transporting students to their home reserves if the cost of transportation was less than the cost of burying the student where they died. This is consistent with practice throughout the system's history; namely to keep burial costs low and oppose sending the bodies of deceased students back to their home community.

Since the schools were virtually all church-run, Christian burial was the norm. Such burials were likely within cemeteries on school grounds, or at a nearby church mission. These cemeteries likely served all members of the denomination, including the missionaries themselves. For example, the cemetery at the Roman Catholic St. Mary's Mission (near Mission, BC), was intended originally for priests and nuns from the mission as well students from the residential school. Three Oblate bishops were buried there along with settlers, their descendants, and residential students.<sup>40</sup>

When the Battleford school in closed in 1914, Principal E. Matheson reminded Indian Affairs that there was a school cemetery that contained the bodies of seventy to eighty individuals, most of who were former students. He worried that unless the government took steps to care for the cemetery it would be overrun by stray cattle.<sup>41</sup> Matheson had good reason for wishing to see the cemetery maintained: several of his family members were also buried there.<sup>42</sup> These concerns proved prophetic since the location of this cemetery is not recorded in the available documentation, nor does it appear in an internet search of Battleford cemeteries (Figure 64, 65). It may be indicated by a rectangular area with surface modifications located to the southwest of the actual school grounds (Figure 66). As indicated in Figure 65, this locality is within the land formerly owned by the Residential School, and likely was located immediately west of the historically reported IRS stable.

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<sup>40</sup> Fraser River Heritage Park, The OMI Cemetery, <http://www.heritagepark-mission.ca/omicemetery.html> accessed 4 November 2014.

<sup>41</sup> Wasylow, "History of Battleford Industrial School for Indians," 268.

<sup>42</sup> TRC, CAR, Anglican Diocese of Saskatoon, List of Burials in Battleford Industrial School Graveyard, no date. [24b-c000001-List\_of\_burials\_in\_Battleford\_Industrial\_School\_graveyard\_1895-1914.]

The rationale guiding standard practice when addressing IRS student deaths is evident in Principal J.F. Woodsworth's correspondence regarding the aftermath of the 1918 influenza epidemic that struck the Red Deer (Alberta) IRS. Apparently all the students and many of the staff came down with influenza, with five students dying. Four died at the school, while a fifth died while running away. That boy's body was returned to his home community, the Saddle Lake Reserve, perhaps because of the extraordinary circumstances experienced at the school the boy had fled.

Everyone was so sick that it was impossible for us to bury the dead. There was no one here to dig graves in our own school cemetery [sic]. I thought the best thing to do was to have the undertaker from Red Deer take charge of and bury the bodies. This was done, and they now lie buried in Red Deer. The charges for this extra accommodation amount to about \$30.00 a child; that is for the four who died here. In view of the emergency and the totally unexpected nature of the case I shall be glad if the Department will bear part of this expense. I believe the total undertaker bill is \$130.00. I instructed the undertaker to be as careful as possible in his charges, so he gave them a burial as near as possible to that of a pauper. They are buried two in a grave.<sup>43</sup>

Because of incapacity of school staff to bury the children within the school cemetery, the burial costs in the Red Deer municipal cemetery were judged to be "unavoidable", and Indian Affairs Deputy Minister Duncan Campbell Scott agreed to reimburse the school for the costs.<sup>44</sup> While Scott made no reference to an existing policy, the letter demonstrates that under normal circumstances the schools were expected to cover the burial costs of students who died at school. The most cost-effective way of doing that would be to undertake burial in a cemetery on school grounds. Indian Affairs would only pay for a child's burial under unusual circumstances, and if it paid, it expected the costs to be kept as low as possible. In this the department conformed to the general practice of the period in the treatment of those who died in institutions. It was not uncommon for hospitals to have cemeteries into which indigent patients were buried, while workhouses

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<sup>43</sup> TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, RG10, volume 3921, file 116,818-1B, J.F. Woodsworth to Secretary, Indian Affairs, 25 November 1918. [EDM-000956]

<sup>44</sup> TRC, NRA, Library and Archives Canada, RG10, Vol. 3921, File 116, 818-1B, Reel C-10162, Duncan Campbell Scott to J.F. Woodsworth, 5 December 1918. [EDM-000957]

for the poor also had cemeteries. Many Canadians ended up in unmarked paupers' graves.<sup>45</sup>

The Department of Indian Affairs was universally reluctant to send deceased students home for burial. In her memoirs, Eleanor Brass recalled how the body of a boy, who hung himself at the File Hills (Saskatchewan) school in the early twentieth century, was buried on the Peepeekisis Reserve even though his parents lived on the Carlyle Reserve.<sup>46</sup> In 1913 two girls, Anna Lahache from Kahnawake and Jennie Robertson from Garden River, drowned while on a picnic expedition at the Spanish, Ontario school.<sup>47</sup> School officials buried Jennie at the school after being unable to reach her mother within four days.<sup>48</sup> Anna's body was not recovered until a week after the drowning. While Anna's mother requested that her body be returned home for burial, it was decided that it was too badly decomposed and the cost too high.<sup>49</sup> In 1938 a mother requested that the body of her son, who was dying of tubercular meningitis at the Spanish school, be sent to her in Cornwall, Ontario, for burial upon his death.<sup>50</sup> The response from Indian Affairs to the school was:

I have to point out that it is not the practice of the Department to send bodies of Indians by rail excepting under very exceptional circumstances. Bodies so shipped have to be properly prepared by the undertakers for transshipments under the laws of the province, and the expense of a long

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<sup>45</sup> For examples of a pauper's cemetery at a workhouse in Canada, see: Wellington County, House of Industry Cemetery, <http://www.wellington.ca/en/discover/cemeteryhoi.asp#Follow%20link%20to%20the%20House%20of%20Industry%20Cemetery%20page>, accessed 5 November 2014 and Canada's Historic Places, York County Municipal Home Cemetery, <http://www.lieuxpatrimoniaux.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=13125>, accessed 5 November 2014. For an example of a cemetery with a special section for paupers, see: Canada's Historic Places, Beechwood Cemetery National Historic Site of Canada <http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=1210>, accessed 5 November 2014. For an example of a hospital with an attached pauper's cemetery, see: Bourget, "Chapels of Rest and Cemeteries," 1.

<sup>46</sup> Brass, *I Walk in Two Worlds*, 26.

<sup>47</sup> Library and Archives Canada, RG 10, Volume 6217, file 471-1, part 1, N. Dugas to Dear Sir, 25 August 1913. [Story no 1.1.jpg]

<sup>48</sup> Library and Archives Canada, RG 10, Volume 6217, file 471-1, part 1, N. Dugas to Secretary, Indian Affairs, 2 September 1913. [Story no 1.1.6.jpg]

<sup>49</sup> Library and Archives Canada, RG 10, Volume 6217, file 471-1, part 1, N/ Dugas to J.D. McLean, 28 August 1913. [Story no 1.1.7.jpg]

<sup>50</sup> Library and Archives Canada, RG 10, Volume 6219, file 471-13, part 2, J. Howitt to the Secretary, Indian Affairs 20 August 1938. [Story no. 2.1.jpg]



journey such as this would be, would entail an expenditure which the Department does not feel warranted in authorizing.<sup>51</sup>

The boy's body was buried at Spanish.<sup>52</sup>

Not all requests were rejected. Clara Tizya, who grew up in Rampart House near Old Crow in northwestern Yukon, recalled "in the early 1920's a girl had died at Carcross Indian Residential School and when they sent the body back, there were many rumours about the children receiving bad treatment and this scared the parents or gave them an excuse for not sending their children to school. And so for the next 25 years, no children were sent out to the Carcross Indian Residential School."<sup>53</sup>

As noted earlier, the earliest currently known Indian Affairs policy document that deals with the burial issue and the cost of shipping bodies dates from 1958. The Social Welfare section of the Indian Affairs field manual for that year provides Indian Affairs staff with direction on the burial of "destitute Indians." This general policy seems to have been also applied to the death of children while in the care of an Indian Residential School. Burial costs were only to be covered by Indian Affairs when they could not "be met from the estate of the deceased." There was no fixed rate of payment: instead "The amount payable by the local municipality for the burial of destitute non-Indians is the maximum generally allowed." Those who died away from their home reserve were to be buried where they died. "Ordinarily the body will be returned to the reserve for burial only when transportation, embalming costs and all other expenses are borne by next of kin. Transportation may be authorized, however, in cases where the cost of burial on the reserve is sufficiently low to make transportation economically advantageous."<sup>54</sup>

The reluctance to pay the cost of sending bodies home continued into the 1960s. Initially, Indian Affairs was unwilling to pay for shipping the body of twelve-year-old Charlie Wenjack back to his parent's home community in Ogoki, Ontario. The boy had died from exposure in October 1966 after running away from the Presbyterian school in Kenora, Ontario (Cecilia Jeffrey IRS, Round Lake-Kenora). Eventually, the government

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<sup>51</sup> Library and Archives Canada, RG 10, Volume 6219, file 471-13, part 2, R.A. Hoey to Howitt, 23 August 1938. Story no. [2.2.jpg]

<sup>52</sup> Shanahan, *The Jesuit Residential School at Spanish*, 96.

<sup>53</sup> Tyza, "Comment," 103-104.

<sup>54</sup> TRC, NRA, DIAND Library Main, JL103 C377, 1958, Indian Affairs Branch Field Manual, "Chapter 13 Social Welfare," Section 13.14. [120.08514]

agreed to pay the transportation costs, which involved both rail and air fees.<sup>55</sup> But eight years later, when thirteen-year-old Charles Hunter drowned while attending the Fort Albany IRS, Ontario, without consulting his parents it was decided to bury him in Moosonee rather than send his body home to Peawanuck. It was not until 2011, after significant public efforts by a sister that Charles Hunter's body was exhumed and returned to Peawanuck for a community burial.<sup>56</sup>

In sum, it is clear that throughout much of the history of the Indian Residential Schools, financially driven procedural barriers (if not formal policy) prevented the return of deceased students to their families for burial. Indeed, the return of deceased children likely only occurred in extraordinary circumstances, and most were buried within school cemeteries, in nearby mission, municipal or reserve cemeteries, or at cemeteries used for burial of destitute hospital patients.

### **Care of IRS cemeteries after school closure**

Consistent with the lack of policy regarding burial of deceased residential school students, no plan appears to have existed regarding maintenance of cemeteries after school closure. Consequently, the current condition of school cemeteries varies widely, and validates the concerns expressed in Principal Matheson's 1914 letter about ongoing care of the Battleford IRS cemetery upon school closure.<sup>57</sup> This draws attention to the urgent need for physical inspection and documentation of cemetery locations, collection of local knowledge, and development of a centralized information repository. Such effort will facilitate recognition and protection of presently undocumented IRS cemeteries by various provincial and territorial agencies responsible for land use planning, environmental impact assessment, and regulation and protection of cemeteries. However,

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<sup>55</sup> TRC, NRA, The Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives, Toronto, ON Acc. 1988-7004, Box 17, File 4, Colin Wasacase to Giollo Kelly, 17 November 1966. [CJC-007910] For Wenjack's age, see: Adams, "The Lonely Death of Charlie Wenjack," 30.

<sup>56</sup> TRC, NRA, National Capital Regional Service Centre - LAC – Ottawa. File 486/18-2, Vol. 2, Box V-24-83, 06/26/1946 - 09/23/1975, M.J. Pierce to Indian Affairs, 23 October 1974. [FTA-001096] Peter Edwards, "This is about reuniting a family, even in death," *Toronto Star*, 4 March 2011, <http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2011/03/0/>, accessed 22 August 2014; Peter Edwards, "Star gets action: Charlie Hunter headed home," *Toronto Star*, 24 March 2011 [http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2011/03/24/star\\_gets\\_action\\_charlie\\_hunter\\_headed\\_home.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2011/03/24/star_gets_action_charlie_hunter_headed_home.html), accessed 22 August 2014.

<sup>57</sup> Wasylyow, "History of Battleford Industrial School for Indians," 268.

this begs the question where responsibility for such effort lies. As discussed in more detail below, for many of the cemeteries identified, it is not always clear who owns the land, which ones are registered as cemeteries (or heritage sites), and what entity has responsibility to undertake documentation, commemoration and ongoing protection.

Continued care and protection of IRS cemeteries varies along a continuum. At one end of the range, some cemeteries continued operation after closure of the associated residential school. This is most common with mission churches and reserve communities. Examples include cemeteries at Moose Factory First Nation (Figure 5), Couchiching First Nation (Figure 10,11), and Lebret (Figure 18, 19). At schools such as Coqualeetza, deceased school children appear to have been buried in cemeteries at the nearby Skwah and Skowkale First Nations that remained in operation after school closure (Figure 51, 52). This also seems to be the case at Sechelt (Figure 12-14), Cowesses (Figure 22-24), Onion Lake (Figure 43, 44) and Squamish First Nations (Figure 33, 34). In other situations, the residential school grounds (with associated cemetery) became parks or heritage sites, and therefore receive continued maintenance. This includes heritage parks (St. Mary's IRS, Mission Figure 67, 68), or provincial or federal heritage sites such as Notre Dame des Victoires at Lac La Biche, Alberta (Figure 30), Morley IRS (McDougal Orphanage), Alberta (Figure 69), and St. Augustine Mission, (Peace River Alberta, Figure 70). The graves of deceased IRS students may receive some level of continued care through local municipalities or Provincial government agencies, but this appears to be a function of local circumstances. Examples include Spanish IRS (Figure 42), and the Protestant cemetery at Chapleau that might contain children who died at the first Chapleau IRS (Figure 53). Also of note is the ongoing maintenance of the Elkhorn IRS cemetery (Figure 41). The Manitoba Historical Society reports that former staff and students of the school established crosses and a commemorative plaque during at 1990 reunion.<sup>58</sup> Ongoing maintenance appears to be undertaken by the Manitoba Ministry of

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<sup>58</sup> (<http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/sites/elkhornresidentialcemetery.shtml>)

Aboriginal and Northern Affairs and Manitoba Infrastructure and Trade <sup>59</sup>, but it does not seem that a similar arrangement is in place for other IRS cemeteries in the province.

At the other end of the continuum, the residential school cemeteries lie abandoned, overgrown and overlooked, or even forgotten. Some examples include both Cecilia Jeffrey and St. Mary's IRS located in Kenora (Figure 36 to 40). In the case of Cecilia Jeffrey (Round Lake location), two adjacent grave yards were identified (Figure 36); one overgrown with trees, with no readily visible fence or grave markers, and the other defined by a unmaintained fence, with the grave yard overgrown with tall grass. With St. Mary's IRS, no indication of the cemetery was identified on the former school grounds (Figure 37-40). This is also evident at the Birtle IRS (Figure 46, 47) where the abandoned school buildings remain standing along the valley wall, but no indication of a cemetery was encountered in the records or in the satellite imagery. In the case of Aklavik, the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches each operated churches, residential schools, hospitals and cemeteries (Figure 55, 56). The Catholic cemetery now appears to be overgrown and not maintained, while the Anglican cemetery still appears to be in operation, with some effort at maintenance (Figure 56). This may be because the Catholic Church seems to be locally inactive, but the All Saints Anglican Church remains in operation.

At Fort Providence local initiatives have led to documentation, commemoration and protection of the cemetery associated with the residential school and the early community. An unpublished report commissioned by the TRC <sup>60</sup> notes that upwards of 298 deaths were registered at the All Saints Catholic church, and much of the following discussion derives from that report. Apparently most of those buried at the cemetery were school children and/or orphans in the care of the mission. It seems that the old cemetery was last used in 1929, and was replaced with a new one located to the northwest (Figure 7). The old cemetery also contained the bodies of two priests, two brothers and four nuns, but in 1948 they were exhumed and reburied in the new cemetery (Figure 6, 7, 8, 9). It

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<sup>59</sup> Alex Maass unpublished Elkhorn Cemetery Report, citing "The Spirit Lives on" presented by Theresa Nault and documented by Barbara Loffredo [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKtUPYjyf\\_w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKtUPYjyf_w) Accessed March 15, 2013

<sup>60</sup> Simon Solomon 2011 'The 'Old' cemetery at Fort Providence, NWT'. Copy on file with TRC and cited extensively in Alex Maass' Fort Providence report.

appears that the other burials remained in the original cemetery that became used for agricultural production at some point after its cemetery function ended. This is consistent with a 1944 map that indicates that wheat was being grown in the area (Figure 7). Albert Canadien<sup>61</sup>, a Dehcho Dene who attended Sacred Heart IRS, recounts tending gardens in the vicinity, but does not appear to have known it was a cemetery. However, others retained knowledge of the old cemetery, and took action to offer it protection.<sup>62</sup> In the mid 1970s, after school closure (and after it was no longer being used for agriculture to support the school), Mr. Jean Marie LeMouel undertook cemetery commemoration by marking its corners from his memory of its location. In the 1990s Mr. Eddie Sanderson corroborated the location and established six steel posts to mark a 19 by 17 metre area. In 1994 a monument was raised nearby in honour of the deceased (Figure 71). This effort continued with the documentary research of Mr. Albert Lafferty, and culminated in the 2003 ground penetrating radar survey by Dr. Brian Moorman and Mr. Tom Andrews that is addressed briefly below.

In her cemetery report regarding St. John's IRS at Chapleau, Alex Maass briefly addresses other locally-led efforts at relocating and documenting graves within the overgrown cemetery located south of the second school location (Figure 54). This investigation is not as far advanced as that at Fort Providence, but did involve a physical inspection, photography and plotting the location of grave markers with a GPS unit. Some graves were identified on the basis of decaying wood crosses and fences, rather inconspicuous metal markers, or as shallow depressions marking collapsed graves shafts. It is unlikely that all the graves were identified within the overgrown woodlot. This is common with many of the unmaintained cemeteries.

In some cases, the former Indian Residential Schools lie isolated from any surrounding community, and the available information suggests that they lie abandoned and largely overlooked. Examples include the Shoal Lake location of Cecilia Jeffery IRS that was closed in 1929, and which is now overgrown with coniferous forest (Figure 72). Other abandoned school sites include McIntosh IRS (Figure 73, 74) where the

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<sup>61</sup> Canadien, Albert. *From Lishamie.*, Penticton: Theytus Books, 2010.

<sup>62</sup> Hugenholtz, Chris H, Moorman, Brian J., and Andrews, Tom. *Integration of Geomatics and Traditional Knowledge to Relocate the Original Fort Providence Cemetery, NWT*. Draft paper, nd. Manuscript on file with Simon Solomon

approximate location of the cemetery is recorded on a site map. This map offers sufficient detail to permit relocation of the original school and some of the other outbuildings, as well as the rectangular stand of trees marking the cemetery on a satellite image (Figure 74).

This contrasts with the original Old Sun IRS (1883-1928), where virtually no information was encountered in the records. This school was located in the Bow River valley about 7 km west of Gleichen, Alberta (Figure 75), but in 1931 it was replaced with a new school located immediately south of town (Figure 75). The early mission school was established at the encampment of a band led by NA TO SA PI (Sun Elder or Sun Old Man), in what was called North Camp Flats within Siksika First Nation. The shelter offered by the valley with its many freshwater springs draining from the bank made it an attractive place for such camps, but no precise location for the school and hospital complex is evident in the records. The Siksika Nation was severely affected by disease epidemics in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and this also impacted the Old Sun school. It is likely that numerous graves are associated with this school/hospital complex, but no precise locational information was found, nor were surface features common with other cemeteries observed in the satellite imagery. One possible candidate for the cemetery near North Camp Flats is illustrated in Figure 76, and consists of a square area defined by trees on three sides. Confirmation of this possibility must await the availability of local information.

The school in North Camp Flats was destroyed in a fire in 1928, and in 1929 it was replaced with new brick school located south of Gleichen (Figure 75). This residential school operated until 1971, whereupon it was taken over by the community and became the Old Sun Community College. An extensive cemetery is located to southwest of the school (Figure 75, 76) that is likely associated with the post-1929 school, and perhaps was also used by the larger Siksika community.

The importance of local information to amplify and validate that deriving from archival or internet-based resources cannot be overstated. For example, sometimes virtually no cemetery information is readily available within the archival records, but knowledge of the existence and location of cemeteries is locally held. This includes File

Hills IRS (Saskatchewan), whereby the only archival record of the school cemetery is a reference to a location within a specific quarter section of land, and a local report that it was within 400 to 800 metres of the former school site. Based on this information, it was tentatively identified in the satellite imagery (Figure 59-60).

Similar local knowledge was critically important in relocating the cemetery associated with the Red Deer IRS that closed in 1919 (Figure 77). This information was collected as part of archaeological impact assessment of proposed development (Garcin and Gibson 2008). The burial area included several graves marked with badly decomposed wood markers, but the area was heavily overgrown with forest vegetation, making it difficult to define the extent of the cemetery. In an effort to confirm some possible grave features observed within the area identified by the local resident, the archaeological inspection included a shallow block excavation designed to identify the top of grave shafts visible below the topsoil zone. The excavation report emphasized how the local knowledge was integral in appropriately identifying this poorly documented cemetery, thereby avoiding accidental impact from the proposed development.

### **Strategies for on-site cemetery documentation**

Documenting and protecting Indian Residential School cemeteries from disturbance will become an increasingly important issue as urban development, infrastructure expansion, and re-sale or re-utilization of old school lands becomes more common. This is not a new problem. Archival records report late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century leveling and re-use of old cemetery grounds as gardens at Fort Providence and Norway House-Rossville. At Muskowekwan IRS, accidental disturbance of unmarked graves occurred during installation of new sewer lines. There will be other examples of cemeteries that have already been impacted by development, and many more remain vulnerable because of generally poor documentation.

A recent debate about how best to protect and commemorate the Regina IRS (1891-1910) (Figure 78, 79) cemetery serves to illustrate the dilemmas facing many jurisdictions when dealing with the cemeteries, particularly those that now lie abandoned. The Regina IRS cemetery was established on the western edge of the school property at

701 Pinkie Road (Figure 78), but it became privately owned in the 1980s<sup>63</sup>. In light of proposed development in the area, concern was raised about how best to protect the school cemetery. An unpublished 2014 report prepared by Regina Planning Department indicates that it contains the bodies of First Nations and Métis students as well as the children of the school's first principal. A 2012 archaeological survey<sup>64</sup> over the south part of the fenced cemetery yielded evidence of 22 graves, but wind-blown sediment mantled and obscured the north half. It was estimated that approximately 40 burials might be within the fenced area, but other graves may lie undetected outside the fenced area. This is a real possibility since archived documents dating to 1921 indicate that the original cemetery fence was destroyed in a prairie fire which might have also destroyed the wood marker crosses of up to 35 or 40 graves.<sup>65</sup> A sewer line runs immediately north of the fenced cemetery (Figure 78). This 'near miss' is problematic in light of the uncertainty over the full extent of the cemetery, and emphasizes the importance of site documentation to establish sufficiently large protective buffers.

The planning document identified and evaluated various strategies for protection of the cemetery to be considered by the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee. The first option involved the City of Regina taking no further action, and pointed out that the cemetery is registered under the Saskatchewan Cemeteries Act, 1999, and that under this legislation, the landowner is deemed responsible for ongoing care. The cemetery is also currently registered as an archaeological site and receives some level of protection under the Heritage Property Act.

The second option again references the Cemeteries Act to note that the local municipality has the power to compel the landowner to maintain the cemetery to a suitable standard. This was deemed to be adherence to the guidelines for 'dryland vegetation management' (i.e. regular cutting of grass within and around the cemetery). This recommended option ensured some level of maintenance of the cemetery while

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<sup>63</sup> Unpublished report dated April 7, 2014 produced for the Regina Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee. Report on file with TRC.

<sup>64</sup> According to a Metro News article dating to Feb. 27, 2013, this study was conducted by Stantec archaeologists Lisa Hein and David McLeod, and involved near surface geophysical survey (electrical conductivity) designed to identify sediment disturbed by excavation of grave shafts.

<sup>65</sup> Metro News article dated Feb 27, 2013 citing archives correspondence by Jen McAra.



minimizing the landowner's financial burden (reduce weed growth, and minimize the risk of fire), but fell short of offering enhanced heritage protection.

The final three options explicitly address the advisability of differing levels of municipal and provincial designation, commemoration and protection. The document reveals an interest in protecting and commemorating the cemetery, but each of the last three options was tempered by complex considerations regarding landowner responsibilities, the cost of site documentation required to facilitate heritage designation, and the potential risk to municipalities of precedent-setting decisions with budget implications. Coupled with all the options were concerns about taking action without appropriate consultation with First Nations communities from whom the deceased students originated. These complex issues will be common with many future discussions about how best to address the Indian Residential School cemeteries, particularly those that lie abandoned and unmaintained.

On-site evaluation of IRS cemeteries might involve a range of activities that vary widely in cost and required expertise. At its most basic, it can involve mapping the cemetery and the distribution of visible graves within it. Such graves might be associated with wood, stone or metal markers or monuments, by picket fences encircling the graves, or perhaps only by depressions or hummocks that might represent unmarked graves. Examples of such preliminary documentation include that at the Chapleau IRS Cemetery, Katherine Nichols' ongoing MA research at the Brandon IRS cemetery, and the work reported by Garcin and Gibson (2008) at the Red Deer IRS cemetery. Ground Penetrating Radar surveys were also conducted at Fort Providence IRS<sup>66</sup>, and at Edmonton IRS<sup>67</sup>. Nichols also reports that ground penetrating radar formed part of her ongoing research at Brandon IRS cemetery (Nichols 2014: Per. Comm.).

Cemetery inspection and mapping can be complicated by disturbance and destruction of surface evidence by site-re-utilization, while overlying vegetation can obscure the remnant grave markers and depressions. The full spatial extent of abandoned and

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<sup>66</sup> Unpublished Cemetery report for Fort Providence by Alex Maass that cites Moorman nd "Delineation of the 'Old' Graveyard at Fort Providence, Northwest Territories, Unpublished report, Dept. of Geography and Dept. of Geology and Geophysics, University of Calgary.

<sup>67</sup> Unpublished Edmonton IRS cemetery report by Alex Maass citing Maverick Inspection Ltd., Ground Penetrating Radar Preliminary Report #11810, August 4, 2011

overgrown cemeteries may also not be known, with unmarked graves remaining undetected within and beyond the accepted cemetery limits. Natural undulations in the ground surface can be mistaken for collapsed graves, making it difficult to unequivocally delimit the cemetery extent. Effectively mapping and documenting long-abandoned cemeteries may require implementation of a range of investigation methods that require specialized skills.

In situations of well-maintained cemeteries (such as Elkhorn IRS, Figure 41), relatively straightforward documentation might involve little more than consumer-grade Global Positioning Systems (GPS), cameras, a compass and 50 metre tapes. This might be sufficient to establish a control grid, and map of the distribution of graves making up the cemetery. Such mapping might be sufficient for comparatively well-defined cemeteries such as that at Brandon IRS (Figure 80). However even on this open site it was often difficult to conclusively identify unmarked graves without intensive efforts at ground clearing, and close inspection. Katherine Nichols (2014: Per. Comm.) reports a significant investment of time and effort was associated with her field research.

Site documentation can be quite challenging in more complicated situations involving abandoned cemeteries where individual graves are no longer marked, are dispersed, or are overgrown with vegetation. This is particularly the case when virtually nothing is known about the location of either the Indian Residential School or its cemetery. Such a situation characterizes the first Cecilia Jeffery IRS (1902-1929), located somewhere on a peninsula between Rice Bay and Shoal Lake (Figure 72). In light of the early date of occupation, there are no indications of the former school site in the available satellite imagery, nor are maps available for the site. In this case, relocation of this school and cemetery would require an extensive walking survey throughout this locality (coupled with solicitation of local information). Dense vegetation may impede identification of surface evidence, and very old cemeteries might be difficult to locate in the absence of grave markers. Such work is costly, slow, labour-intensive, and prone to sampling error.

While much better documented, the two cemeteries associated with the second Cecilia Jeffrey IRS (Round Lake, Kenora 1929-1974) will also require a significant amount of fieldwork to more fully document them (Figure 36). This site contains two

sequentially operating cemeteries, the oldest of which is described as 25 feet wide by 325 feet long along the south side of Homestake Road (Figure 81:C), and with the second cemetery area located nearby (Figure 81:D, 82). The long narrow configuration of the older cemetery likely reflects the proximity of bedrock and the limited amount of suitable land on IRS property between Homestake Road and the CPR land. A brief ground inspection in the summer of 2014 revealed no surface evidence of the older cemetery within the sparse forest (Figure 81, 82), but a few white crosses protrude from the tall grass within the fenced cemetery (Figure 82). Investigation of such sites might involve removal of obscuring vegetation, the search for subtle ground undulations indicating collapsed graves, and site mapping using a grid system established with a theodolite or total station (for similar circumstances but variable conditions, see Brandon IRS cemetery [Figure 80], and the Regina IRS cemetery [Figure 78, 79]). Such site investigation can have significant time and financial requirements, and must be carefully planned to ensure that site documentation does not accidentally disturb or destroy the evidence that is being sought. Prior to any documentation, planning discussions are required that includes assorted government agencies, First Nations, municipalities, churches and landowners. This might address suitable methods and documentation standards, and how to finance the operations.

Mapping might also include aerial photography, using conventional cameras or those capable of recording beyond the visible spectrum (i.e. infra-red and ultra-violet). Such imagery can document differential vegetation growth patterns representing graves and other ground disturbances. If appropriately geo-referenced, such images might offer sufficient map resolution when coupled with ground inspection to confirm the observed patterns. Such high-resolution image collection might include satellite imagery, or that collected with conventional aircraft or Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs or drones). Choosing the appropriate methodology involves considering the required scale of resolution (based upon the minimum size of feature to be detected), the nature of vegetation cover, the degree of ground disturbance, and the available budget. Another airborne remote sensing method that might become more cost-effective in the future is Lidar survey. This involves high-resolution relief mapping using laser beams that can penetrate vegetation canopies to map the obscured ground surface. This can permit non-invasive

high-resolution mapping of surface features (such as collapsed graves) that might not be readily detected through ground inspection.

Cemetery mapping can also involve near-surface geophysical techniques that include Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR), electrical resistivity or conductivity, and magnetic gradiometer surveys. Each of these approaches involves systematic evaluation of the survey area using a control grid. Each type of instrument measures some ‘characteristic’ of the ground at locations defined by the coordinate system. Changes in these characteristics might reflect normal and natural variation in the sediment, or alternatively, some indication of human modification such as a grave. By systematically plotting these geophysical characteristics, the analyst seeks to non-invasively detect their patterned distribution, and then interpret their origin/function. While much more complicated than presented here, under the right conditions these approaches can detect unmarked graves. However these methods seldom produce results that are immediately and intuitively interpretable, and often require supplemental evaluation. The survey methodology must be designed after considering the size/scale of the features being sought, and also the site circumstances. Finally, the targets or anomalies detected by these methods must also be subjected to post-survey validity testing (ground truthing) to help confirm their nature.

Ground penetrating radar survey involves transmitting a radar beam into the earth, and measuring the time interval before those beams are reflected back to the instrument. Put simply, the greater the time interval before the radar beam returns, the greater the depth of the detected unconformity. These ‘returns’ might reflect natural changes in sedimentary texture, or alternatively, culturally-derived unconformities, obstructions or voids. Under ideal conditions, plotting the spatial pattern of these unconformities permits detection and interpretation of buried features. Field investigations conducted at Fort Providence employed this methodology, and Figure 83 offers example output from that survey. Katherine Nichols (2014: Per. Comm.) conducted similar research at the Brandon IRS cemetery, but her work is still in production and is not yet available for discussion.

Electrical conductivity and resistivity surveys involve measuring the flow of electricity through the earth between electrodes placed into the ground surface. These electrodes are sequentially placed along a grid throughout the survey area, and the analyst

seeks to map patterned variation in the amount of electricity flowing through the ground. Variation in electrical conductivity might reflect differences in sediment texture, moisture, organic content, constituent artifacts, buried obstructions and filled pits. As earth placed back into the grave shaft will be distinct from the surrounding undisturbed sedimentary matrix, mapping changes in electrical conductivity can reveal patterns representing the grave shafts.

Magnetic gradiometer surveys involve measuring localized differences in the earth's magnetic field. By measuring the varying intensity of the magnetic fields across the survey area, one can estimate the location, intensity and perhaps depth of localized magnetic fields. This becomes archaeologically useful when human activities modify the earth's natural magnetic fields. Archaeologically relevant magnetic patterns might derive from thermal alteration of magnetic minerals within the soil (i.e. hearths), magnetic anomalies deriving from bricks or pottery concentrations, or ferric metals within the sediment. Of interest here is that filled pits (i.e. graves) may contain sediment with magnetic characteristics that differ from the surrounding natural matrix.

All of these approaches require specialized expertise to design the survey, operate the equipment, and differentiate between natural versus human-induced patterns. Applying these methods to archaeological enquiry requires specialized expertise to design the survey at a scale consistent with the nature and magnitude of the features being sought, with attention to natural and cultural factors that might impede interpretation, and with sufficient experience to credibly identify and interpret localized and subtle subsurface features. Experience with geophysical prospection at the scale required to detect graves might not be found in geological exploration or engineering firms. Instead, archaeologists with the appropriate experience might be required, particularly to do the ground-truthing necessary to interpret the detected anomalies. Archaeological investigation using such techniques is not yet common in North America, and the necessary equipment and expertise is not widely available.

The results of near-surface geophysical survey are seldom obvious or self-evident. The detected unconformities can derive from diverse cultural or natural sources, and can be detrimentally affected by subsequent disturbance, variable sediment texture and

moisture regimes, surface or subsurface bedrock or glacial till deposits, surface trash (specifically metallic objects), and magnetic interference from fences, hydro-electric lines, buried electrical lines or water supply trenches. Survey results can also be affected by instrument or operator error, diurnal magnetic variations<sup>68</sup>, or other factors. Effective archaeological interpretation of geo-physical data is dependent upon post-survey inspection of the ground surface, supplemental investigation with a metal detector or soil probe, or test excavation. Given the special circumstances of cemetery investigations, subsurface ground-truthing is often not possible. This might require a precautionary approach whereby protective buffers are established to encompass possible grave shafts. One alternative approach employed at the Red Deer IRS cemetery involved the removal of the top few centimeters of topsoil in a block excavation to the point that rectangular grave shafts became evident in contrast to the undisturbed subsoil surrounding them (Garcin and Gibson 2008). Once the location, arrangement and size of these graves were documented, excavation was discontinued and the block was refilled and restored. Such shallow subsurface testing might be strategically employed, particularly in an effort to evaluate isolated or irregular surface features that might be either graves or natural surface undulations.

## **What do we now know about IRS cemeteries?**

The TRC cemetery research enjoyed mixed success because of the large number of schools, their broad geographic extent and temporal range, and the limited amount of surviving information. Alex Maass focused on developing comprehensive reports for schools where the records revealed evidence of a cemetery. Hamilton took a different approach, and began by considering the temporal pattern of school operations, coupled with the historic trends in reported student mortality. While constrained by the unreliability of the mortality records, the latter approach sought to identify when risk of death was higher within the Indian Residential Schools, and which schools were in operation during those times. Given the high probability of student deaths at the many schools operating prior to 1950, it is likely that most were the scene of chronic illness and

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<sup>68</sup> Atmospheric variation in the earth's magnetic field caused by variable solar radiation that can vary dramatically over a short period of time.

death (Table 1). This rather daunting observation led to a systematic search for each school using maps, photographs and satellite images of former school grounds. This was coupled with a systematic examination of satellite imagery surrounding each school location in search of the nearest cemeteries. The product of this search is presented in the companion volume to this summary report.

## **Recommendations regarding documentation and protection of IRS cemeteries**

Offering recommendations about the future care of IRS cemeteries is a complex and sensitive issue. While former schools might be associated with specific First Nations, the cemeteries may contain the bodies of children from many communities. They may also contain those of teachers (or their children) who died while working at the institutions. In some cases the cemeteries remain in operation and receive ongoing care, particularly when they are part of an existing churchyard, or are located within a reserve or non-Aboriginal community. But many others lie abandoned and largely forgotten. No one set of recommendations will serve all circumstances.

The now-closed Indian Residential Schools continue to impact survivors, their families and their communities, and questions about the fate of missing and deceased children are particularly sensitive. Any physical investigation of the cemeteries must involve close consultation with interested communities, with identification of community-driven objectives, suitable methodologies, and with attention to spiritual and emotional sensitivities. This leads to the first and perhaps most important recommendation.

**1) Given the painful legacy associated with the Indian Residential Schools, developing strategies for documentation, commemoration and preservation of the cemeteries must be led by the First Nations most affected.**

If it is accepted that the cemeteries require documentation, ongoing maintenance, commemoration and protection from disturbance, then what entity should undertake financial responsibility and supervise such work? On first light, one could suggest that either the federal government that financed IRS operations, or the churches that operated most of the schools, should take the lead. However, regulation of cemeteries is a

provincial and/or territorial responsibility, and much of Canadian environmental impact assessment is regulated at the provincial/territorial/municipal level. Clearly, these levels of government also need to be centrally involved. Finally, diverse Aboriginal communities will also be intensely interested. At issue is how to initiate and coordinate such multi-lateral engagement.

**2) It is recommended that the federal government initiate multi-lateral engagement to identify strategies and procedures for the ongoing documentation, maintenance, commemoration and protection of Indian Residential School Cemeteries.**

In the event that cemetery documentation and protection is undertaken, then the generally sparse written documentation must be integrated with locally held information. Often this information will be unwritten, and held by school survivors, staff or local residents who remember the schools in operation. This locally held information can be used to verify, correct and amplify archival information collected by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It might involve local initiatives to physically document cemetery extent and location, and also identify individual graves within or around the cemetery area.

**3) In light of the limited written documentation about IRS cemeteries, additional information must be sought from IRS survivors and other knowledge holders.**

When undertaking physical inspection and documentation of the cemeteries, the most cost-effective strategy involves collection and consolidation of information prior to initiating fieldwork. This will refine and narrow the ‘search field’ to improve efficiency of the physical search, and aid selection of the most effective field methodologies. It also enables solicitation of community wishes regarding the most appropriate approaches to site investigation. This includes preferred protocols regarding prayers and ceremonials prior to a site visit.

**4) The collection and integration of archival data and local knowledge should precede any potentially invasive technical inspection and investigation of a cemetery site.**

Long-abandoned cemeteries may only yield fragile surface evidence of their existence. This might be limited to decaying grave markers, picket fences, offerings or grave houses. Sometimes shallow depressions or hummocks might be the only remaining



indication of graves, and the cemetery may be overgrown with grass, weeds or woody vegetation. Care must be taken to avoid inadvertent destruction of surface evidence when seeking to document, beautify or commemorate the cemetery area. Obscuring surface vegetation should not be immediately cleared since it might also disturb fragile remnants of grave markers, and differential vegetation growth might suggest grave locations. Site documentation might require archaeological expertise to undertake preliminary mapping and photo-documentation, air photo interpretation coupled with topographic mapping, near-surface geophysical survey, and test excavation.

**5) When undertaking cemetery site documentation, maintenance and commemoration, care should be taken to minimize inadvertent damage. Specialized expertise might be required to explore, identify and map individual graves in and around the cemetery.**

As infrastructure and resource development accelerates throughout Canada, the risk of damage to relatively undocumented IRS cemeteries increases. Depending upon the jurisdiction, environmental impact assessment is usually required prior to development, and this includes assessment of ‘heritage sites’ and other cultural values. The latter involves a review of existing documentation, evaluation of the potential for heritage sites within the development zone, and also often a physical search. Such work is often done in phases, with preliminary review of centralized archives and databases to inform subsequent investigation. Local knowledge about IRS cemeteries might not be readily accessible to non-local planners, resource managers and impact assessors. Thus, it is important that locally collected information is shared with agencies responsible for land use planning, environmental impact assessment, and cemeteries protection and regulation.

Such information sharing might be challenging in light of limited documentation, unclear jurisdictional responsibility, and uncoordinated consolidation of information. One option might involve use of already existing information registries within most provincial and territorial jurisdictions. This includes the inventory of known archaeological/heritage sites or the registry of cemeteries, each of which might be augmented with IRS cemetery information. At minimum, such a registry should include the identification, duration and affiliation of each cemetery, its legal description, current land ownership and condition, and its location coordinates (Latitude/Longitude and UTM). These coordinates should be

sufficiently precise to define a polygon that encloses the presently known cemetery. The companion cemetery report that addresses each Residential School includes information useful as first step towards developing such a registry.

**6) In order to enhance IRS cemetery protection, information must be made available to planning and regulatory agencies. One approach might involve development of an internet-based registry where information is consolidated and effectively managed, and where authorized users can access it.**

Collection, management and querying information about IRS cemeteries can be challenging given unclear jurisdictional responsibility, and in light of concerns over the costs associated with collecting, interpreting and managing information. This is evident with the recent debate about appropriate designation of the Regina Indian Residential School Cemetery noted above. Indeed, the dilemmas addressed in that case are common for many IRS cemeteries. It is generally accepted that IRS cemeteries require documentation, commemoration, ongoing care and protection from disturbance. The challenge is to develop a consultative framework to identify appropriate strategies, and then identify the expertise and resources required to undertake the required work. Addressing these issues is beyond the scope of this project, but is clearly a key issue to be addressed as an outcome of this research.

## **Conclusion**

The Indian Residential School era has an enduring painful legacy that continues to impact Aboriginal communities across Canada. One means of addressing this is to learn of the fate of missing and deceased children who attended the schools. While we know that over 3,200 children died, we remain uncertain where they were buried. The cemeteries that have been documented by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are, for the most part, abandoned, disused and vulnerable to accidental disturbance. Developing a strategy to address this problem is complicated, and will require long-term and thoughtful discussions about the most appropriate documentation, commemoration and protection procedures. This report should be treated as an opening effort designed to be a catalyst for further investigation.

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